

Claims

1 A television programme selection system, said system including means for use by the system user to allow the selection of a television programme by interaction with a display screen and a broadcast data receiver for the generation of audio, visual and auxiliary data from digital data received from a broadcast service provider, and characterised in that said system includes a means for a viewing time period to be selected which suits the users availability and, in response to the selected viewing time period, the system determines which of the available programmes can be watched in their entirety, substantially in their entirety or with respect to other selected criteria, in the viewing time period and indicates any such programmes to the user.

2 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that the indicated programmes are those which are suitable for viewing in their entirety in the selected viewing time period and the user can then select one of said indicated programmes for viewing.

3 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that if no programmes are available for viewing in their entirety in the selected viewing time period, a message is displayed on screen to indicate this to the user.

4 A system according to claim 3 characterised in that if no programmes are available the user can redefine the viewing time period and repeat the programme search.

5 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that the selected viewing time period for which the television system identifies suitable programmes is selected by the user.

6 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that the selected viewing time period starts at the instant of the user interaction with the system to select the viewing period such that the user only has to indicate the end time of the period.

7 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that the start and end times of the selected viewing time period may both be in the future and be selected by the user

8 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that the user can type into the television system the start and end times of the period which their viewing time is to be limited to.

9 A system according to claim 1 characterised in that the user utilises a remote control device of the type commonly provided with television systems to select the viewing time period and also subsequently select programmes from those indicated as being available.

10 A system according to claim 9 characterised in that a number of time period options are displayed on the display screen for selection by the user via the remote control device.

11 A method of selecting a television programme for viewing from a number of available programmes via a television system, said method comprising the steps of the user selecting an appropriate viewing time period, activating a programme selection system in the television system, said programme selection system searching for a programme or programmes from all those which can be generated during that time period from data received from a broadcast service provider and those programmes which can be viewed in their entirety or substantially in their entirety or in relation to some other criteria selected by the user, and which are therefore suitable for

viewing in the selected viewing time period, are indicated to the user for selection.

12 A method according to claim 11 characterised in that the system searches for suitable programmes from programmes which can be generated from data previously received and held in memory means in the broadcast data receiver which forms part of the television system, and programmes which can be generated from data currently transmitted to the system.

13 A method according to claim 11 characterised in that the method includes the additional step of allowing the user to input into the television system the type or types, in terms of user specified criteria, of programmes they would like to watch during the selected time period.

14 A method according to claim 11 characterised in that the search for the programmes is made with respect to data received from the broadcast service provider for use in the generation of an Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) on the display screen, said data including the start and end times of all the programmes available for viewing and which start and end times can be compared with the start and end times of the selected viewing time period.

15 A method according to claim 11 characterised in that if the user does not wish to watch the programme or programmes indicated by the television system, the television system can be used in a normal manner with the user manually selecting a programme to watch regardless of whether it matches the selected viewing time period.